

Phadke's philosophy: Love for music, politics are sides of same coin

BY AROON TIKEKAR

SUDHIR Phadke had many a time stated that his life had reached its conclusion after producing the film *Veer Savarkar*. This was entirely in keeping with the discipline taught by the RSS and a code of personal strictness that he lived by. When the creative urge is replaced by nostalgia, creative people consider it the end of the road. It's a fitting irony that he should take leave of this world just as his most famous creation 'Geet Ramayan' has started playing on All India Radio again. GD Madgulkar-Sudhir Phadke together, through the 'Geet Ramayan' virtually brought home the lessons of life into many a Maharashtrian household, especially to those over 50 years of age.

While 'Geet Ramayan' made Madgulkar a great poet, it made Phadke a great music director and singer. There are couples

that have inspired people to live their life anew, truisms of life told in a manner unparalleled. From this, people began to find parallels in their lives, that their unhappiness is nothing compared to what Lord Ram had to go through. There are many elements that must come together in an exact manner for a creative work of great merit, which did in this case. Each verse and each note can still create a lump in the throat. Phadke, like Madgulkar, gave expression to many worlds of emotions among the Marathi-speaking people later but even if they had not written or composed anything after 'Geet Ramayan', their names would have been written in golden letters.

Phadke's unquestionable contribution has been to the genre of

bhavgeet. His journey that began in the world of English poetry traversed through *natyageet*, and Hindi film songs to reach the milestone of Marathi *bhavgeet*, where he found the work of many



OBIT

well-known poets which called for exceptional music and singing. Phadke's talents matched the poetry. In the 1960s and 70s, Marathi-speaking population moved in a world that was brought alive by his *bhavgeets*, that cel-

ebrated love, bhakti, compassion...Marathi poetry may have since climbed great heights but *bhavgeets* still retain their special place in the hearts of many, in itself is an achievement, a measure of the greatness of people associated with the genre. If the work of B R Tambe, Bhavanishankar Pandit, N G Deshpande, Anil, G

D Madgulkar, Mangesh Padgaonkar, V R Kant, P Sawalaram are well-known today, then Phadke had a big contribution to make. When the youth of today still dig into the Madgulkar-Phadke *bhavgeet* for their cultural programmes, it must be because the verse and music of that era has something special and ever-lasting.

Phadke was always particular about conveying the exact and true meaning of the poetry that he set to music, giving emphasis to the clear pronunciation. His music and singing was characterised by pure diction, clear tone, an exactness and emotional connect to listeners, much like his personal discipline. If poets demanded that their lines come alive in his voice, it was because of this clarity of tone and ability to touch the common man. Phadke immortalised the love songs as well as the pining poems ones penned by Padgaonkar, Yashwant Deve, Shanta Shelke.

Ask a Marathi-lover for his/her ten favourite songs and it will come as no surprise that most of them are Phadke's. '*Kadhi bahar kadhi shishir*', '*Ashi paakhare yeti aanik smriti thevun jaati*', '*Toch chandma nabhaat*'...such priceless songs are a testimony to Phadke's talents, they will always remain that.

Phadke gave musical score to Marathi and Hindi films as well. *Bhabhi ki chudiyen* was an adaptation of *Vahinichya bangdya* but that film brought him untold popularity. Phadke was in the vanguard of Marathi cultural bloom, yet he maintained a distinctness. Apart from music, his idea of politics was clear. That the man who set delicate tunes to wonderful poetry should stand up so staunchly for his political beliefs did not surprise many. His philosophy in life: love for music and politics are two sides of the same coin. Phadke played an important role in the Goa Liberation Movement, and fought

hard to get revolutionaries like Mohan Ranade and others released from jail.

Phadke showed, time and again, his principles in life, never compromising on them till the very end. The man who was swept away by Savarkar in their early meetings dreamt of making a film on him. Despite all difficulties and obstacles, he managed to complete the film. To get 'his' Savarkar on screen, Phadke changed directors, lead actors, who bad-mouthed the project. This brought financial difficulties but Phadke did not compromise. The film was completed and released in cinema halls. Only then did Phadke breathe easy. To dream of and complete a major project without compromise is the hallmark of a great man. Phadke was one. Phadke has taken his last bow, but not before passing on the legacy to his talented son Shridhar.

— (Dr Tikekar is Editor of *Loksatta*)